

REMARKS

Claims 1-5 are pending in the application. Independent claim 1 has been amended to correct punctuation, and to replace “a axial direction” with “an axial direction,” thereby obviating the claim objection. Independent claim 1 also has been amended to recite that “the end surfaces of the tubular wall portions abut each other when the abutment members are pushed towards each other.” The amendments are fully supported by the application as originally filed (see, e.g., specification at page 4, line 37 to page 5, line 1).

Claims 6-15 were withdrawn from consideration as being directed to a non-elected invention. Claims 6-15 have been canceled without prejudice. Applicant reserves the right to file a divisional application based on claims 6-15.

Independent claim 1 recites a coupling for resilient interconnection of two objects, including: an internal coupling device having a supporting piece; a rubber-elastic element, which is arranged around the supporting piece portion; and an external coupling device including “two approximately cup-shaped abutment members, each member having a tubular wall portion and a bottom portion defining an inner portion of the abutment member.”

As amended, independent claim 1 recites: “an end of each tubular wall portion facing away from the bottom portion has an end surface, wherein the end surfaces of the tubular wall portions abut each other when the abutment members are pushed towards each other.”

For example, referring to FIGS. 3-4 of the application, an external coupling device 80 includes two abutment members 82, 84 having tubular wall portions 86, 88, where one end of each tubular wall portion 86, 88 is connected to bottom portions 90, 92 (see, e.g., specification at page 4, lines 10-11 and 15-17). The other end of each tubular wall portion 86, 88 (i.e., that end “facing away from the bottom portion”) is open and has end surfaces 94, 96 (see, e.g., page 4, lines 17-18). As claimed, when the abutment members 82, 84 are pushed towards each other, the end surfaces 94, 96 abut each other (see, e.g., page 4, line 37 to page 5, line 1).

Claims 1, 4, and 5 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 4,671,694 to Brenner et al. ("Brenner"). Claims 2 and 3 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Brenner in view of U.S. Patent 5,340,220 to Sprang et al. ("Sprang"). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Regarding the rejection of independent claim 1 over Brenner, the Brenner reference does not teach or suggest a coupling including two approximately cup-shaped abutment members, where the end surfaces of the tubular wall portions abut each other when the abutment members are pushed towards each other.

The Brenner reference is directed to an elastic articulated coupling having a relatively rigid inner member and a relatively rigid outer member, with an elastomeric body located between the inner and outer members (see, e.g., column 2, lines 50-57).

On page 3 of the Office Action of 12/11/2006, the metal exterior portion 1 depicted in FIG. 2 of Brenner was cited as allegedly corresponding to the Applicant's claimed "external coupling device."

On page 3, last paragraph of the Office Action, it was admitted that the Brenner reference does not teach or suggest "the external device is made of two parts."

On page 4, first paragraph, it was alleged that it would be "a matter of design choice" to modify the metal exterior portion 1 of Brenner into two parts. However, no teaching or suggestion in the Brenner reference or any other reference was cited to support this conclusion.

As amended, independent claim 1 requires two approximately cup-shaped abutment members, where the end surfaces of the tubular wall portions abut each other when the abutment members are pushed towards each other.

The Brenner reference does not teach or suggest the use of two approximately cup-shaped abutment members.

In Brenner, the metal exterior portion 1 (cited as the "external coupling device") is a **single piece** that surrounds an elastic rubber body 2, for example, as shown in FIG. 2 of Brenner. As described in Brenner, the metal exterior portion 1 is cylindrical in shape, and is frictionally connected to the elastic rubber body 2 "by radial and axial bracing of the end regions 4 and 5" (column 3, lines 31-35).

Therefore, the metal exterior portion 1 of Brenner does not include two cup-shaped abutment members, but instead is formed as a **single piece** that is cylindrical in shape. Moreover, the metal exterior portion 1 could not be split into two separate portions, since the metal exterior portion 1 is required to maintain frictional contact with the elastic rubber body 2 and is held by radial and axial bracing, which would be considerably more difficult with two separate portions.

Further, the Brenner reference does not teach or suggest that end surfaces of tubular wall portions of the abutment members abut each other when the abutment members are pushed towards each other.

As discussed above, Brenner does not teach or suggest the use of two abutment members, and thus does not teach or suggest that inward-facing end surfaces of those abutment members would abut each other when the abutment members are pushed together. Brenner simply does not teach or suggest a coupling in which abutment members are separated and then pushed towards each other.

For at least the reasons discussed above, the Brenner reference does not anticipate or otherwise render obvious the Applicant's claimed invention. Therefore, independent claim 1 and dependent claims 2-5 are patentable over Brenner.

It is believed the application is in condition for immediate allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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